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Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

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Tuesday, 6 November 2018, 10.10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Ma Zhaoxu	(China)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mrs. Cordova Soria
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Ipo
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
	France	Mr. Melki
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Tumysh
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands	Mr. Van Oosterom
	Peru	Mr. Tenya
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Sweden	Mr. Orrenius Skau
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United States of America	Mr. Cohen

Agenda

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Letter dated 30 October 2018 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2018/974)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Letter dated 30 October 2018 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2018/974)

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. João Vale de Almeida, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2018/974, which contains the text of a letter dated 30 October 2018 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council, transmitting the fifty-fourth report of the High Representative for Implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I now give the floor to Mr. Inzko.

Mr. Inzko: Before I start, I would like to acknowledge that a number of Central European States — including Poland, the Czech and Slovak Republics and others — are currently celebrating the 100th anniversary of their modern existence. My own country, Austria, will commemorate this date next Monday in a solemn ceremony in the State opera house. Only two days ago, Presidents Macron and Steinmeier commemorated the end of the First World War, which, as Council members know, started with shots in Sarajevo in June 1914.

France and Germany, which once seemed eternal adversaries, are now among the main pillars of the European Union. This is a lesson for the people of the Western Balkans that it can be done, lasting peace is achievable and reconciliation must be possible. The countries of the Western Balkans should emulate the German/French ideas of common history books, youth exchange programmes, common Government meetings between neighbouring countries and a common television programme, such as the French/German *Arte* programme. This could be called *Arte Balkans*.

The defining political event of the past six months in Bosnia and Herzegovina was the 7 October general elections. While international observers characterized the poll as genuinely competitive, the preceding months saw a worrying escalation in divisive public rhetoric, including hate speech and voter intimidation. Moreover, the immediate post-election period has been fraught with complaints of election irregularities. Public trust in the integrity of the electoral system seems to be at an all-time low, and restoring this trust through meaningful improvements must be addressed by the new authorities as an urgent priority.

Looking ahead, the announcement of final, certified election results is expected today, after which the period of forming parliaments and Governments will begin. Overall, the main ethnically defined parties seem to have won the most support in the parliaments, although in the Federation, certain multi-ethnic parties appear to have improved their results remarkably since the last elections. As no party has a clear majority, it is too soon to speculate on which coalitions will ultimately be formed at various levels of authority.

While the process of constituting parliaments and governments is just beginning, the future members of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Presidency are already known: Šefik Džaferović of the Party of Democratic Action, Željko Komšić of the Democratic Front, and Milorad Dodik Alliance of Independent Social Democrats. Mr. Komšić's defeat of the outgoing Croat Presidency Member Dragan Čović has led a number of officials from the Croat Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina and from neighbouring Croatia to declare the election illegitimate and even illegal or anti-Dayton, despite the fact that it was carried out according to the same rules used in every election since 1995.

While some may have the political goal of wishing to change the current system, this cannot be used to deny the legality of a process conducted in line with the law and the Peace Agreement, nor can it be misused to justify future boycotts or blockages. The election of Mr. Dodik as the Serb member of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Presidency has also raised questions, given his past numerous statements against the State of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Additionally, since the elections, he has made some provocative public statements about the Bosnia and Herzegovina flag and the taking of the oath.

Nevertheless, I strongly believe that it is not helpful or appropriate to judge the new Presidency before they have even taken office. They will have significant challenges ahead, and I for one will give them the benefit of the doubt in their ability and willingness to, as the oath of office requires,

> "to respect the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, implement the General Framework Agreement for Peace and its Annexes in their entirety, protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms, and protect the interest and equality of all peoples and citizens".

Despite the difficult environment, integration with the European Union (EU) has remained a bright spot in the political landscape over the past six months. This is one area where leaders with often competing visions of the country can find common ground. In this regard, it is noteworthy that following the submission of an initial 3,300 answers to the European Commission questionnaire during the previous reporting period, the Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities are now working on answers to some 650 follow-up questions received in June.

Despite this good news, other developments over the past several months have highlighted serious deficiencies in the rule of law. As I have said in past briefings, a lack of respect for the final decisions of the judiciary remains a problem. This was seen in the continued failure to implement the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitutional Court's decision in the *Ljubić* case, while local elections in the city of Mostar have not been held since 2008 due to another unaddressed Constitutional Court decision. Thus, for 10 years no elections were held in the city of Mostar.

In this regard, I must call attention to the authorities' ongoing failure since 2009 to implement the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights in the so called *Sejdić and Finci* and related cases, leaving in place severe discrimination against some citizens in exercising their right to stand for public office in the Bosnia and Herzegovina Presidency and House of Peoples. Similarly, a number of cantons in the Federation still have not met their legal obligation to harmonize their Constitutions and to ensure the full equality of Serbs as a constituent people. This too is unacceptable, because in this case we also have a Constitutional Court decision that Serbs are, of course, a constituent people wherever they live.

In addition to the issue of unimplemented court decisions, Bosnia and Herzegovina is also facing a problem with deep-rooted public disappointment in the criminal justice system's seeming incapacity to tackle corruption and deal with organized crime. For example, in Banja Luka, daily public protests have continued over seven months, including a demonstration with tens of thousands of citizens in the days before the elections, over what activists allege is a cover-up by the authorities in the suspicious death in March of David Dragičević. This case of that young student has to be solved urgently, and I will report to the Security Council again on it. This and a similar cases in Sarajevo have raised public outrage, and they are unfortunately not the only such cases. They are symptomatic of the state of the rule of law and the profound disappointment of citizens therein.

Besides the elections, another defining political issue of the past six months has been the dramatic rise in migrant arrivals in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the authorities' response. We have not had such dramatic numbers in past years as we have seen this year. Given Bosnia and Herzegovina's complex constitutional structure and internal political tensions, we need to be aware that this issue could deteriorate in a number of ways — as a humanitarian crisis, in the first instance; from a security point of view; and in terms of the political stability of the country.

Regrettably, the reporting period has continued to see a tendency on all sides for some politicians to deny or relativize war crimes and even to glorify war criminals. In this respect, keeping in mind the fact that two international tribunals have confirmed that genocide was committed in Srebrenica, I consider the repeal by the Government of the Republika Srpska of its earlier 2004 report, which had officially acknowledged the involvement of Republika Srpska

military and police forces in the July 1995 events, to be a significant step backwards for reconciliation. As Council members know, the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), which was created by the Security Council 25 years ago, in 1993, has declared that genocide took place at several locations, and that decision of the ICTY is now being questioned. This also stands in contrast with neighbouring Serbia, whose Parliament adopted an historical declaration condemning the crimes committed in Srebrenica in 2010, a declaration that has remained unchanged and in force.

In conclusion, I would like to make a few recommendations not only to be taken up by the incoming Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities, but also to be supported and encouraged by the wider international community. First, measures need to be undertaken immediately to strengthen the rule of law. Secondly, official institutions need to be supported and strengthened in their functionality, independence and stability. Stability is very important to Bosnia and Herzegovina and its future. Thirdly, economic development needs be kick-started. And finally, these reforms need to be addressed with a sense of urgency in the light of the huge departure of young people from Bosnia and Herzegovina, amounting to some 20,000 to 30,000 a year.

Despite the absence of these issues from the campaign platforms of many of the leading parties, once they take power they will not be able to ignore them. Those who declare EU membership as their goal will need to find compromises, support the functionality of the institutions and accelerate the pace of reform. We as an international community can best support the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina by promoting a vision of the country that recognizes that its integration with Euro-Atlantic structures will also require its leaders to work on integrating its people. After the elections, Bosnia and Herzegovina's political leaders will have an opportunity for a fresh start for the country, its entities and cantons but, above all, its wonderful citizens.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Inzko for his briefing.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2018/989, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

I now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements before the vote.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation will vote in favour of the draft resolution (S/2018/989) extending the mandate of the European Union-led Operation Althea for peacebuilding in Bosnia and Herzegovina. That is because the sponsors took into account our principled considerations, if only at the very last moment.

We are exceedingly disappointed with the working methods that the penholders for the draft resolution chose this year. Instead of taking the logical course of adopting a technical resolution extending Operation Althea's mandate, which in itself raises no doubts, the sponsors took the dangerous path of introducing a highly politicized document. And yet our reaction was easy to predict ahead of time. After all, we already had one sad experience in 2014, when the Russian delegation abstained in the voting and for exactly the same reasons that this time very nearly produced negative consequences for Althea in its current form. At the time, four years ago, we made it clear to colleagues that it had better not happen again (see S/PV.7307). It seemed as if it had worked and over the course of the next few years we had a more or less satisfactory document. And yet this year, for some reason, the sponsors decided to introduce complications into the draft text by imposing their own foreign-policy approaches and thereby manufacturing a crisis. Happily, common sense prevailed. We have to note that in recent years we have seen a trend among some of our Western partners during the process of arriving at agreements on United Nations decisions in which the culture of negotiation has been seriously devalued. That should be rectified immediately.

We want to stress that no Security Council document should predetermine the domestic or foreign-policy priorities of any State Member of the United Nations, and Bosnia and Herzegovina is no exception. In the Council's relevant resolutions and decisions, we need to do everything possible to avoid wording that might be interpreted as supporting the non-consensus-based Euro-Atlantic aspirations of a number of Bosnian forces. If the Security Council approved such provisions, they could undermine the already fragile situation in the country and put pressure on certain ethnic groups.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Bolivia (Plurinational State of), China, Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, France, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Russian Federation, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2443 (2018).

I now give the floor to the members of the Council.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I thank the High Representative for his briefing today and for the work of his Office in maintaining peace and security in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has long been a very important and almost totemic issue for the Council, if one goes back to the start of the conflict in the early 1990s. The United Kingdom remains committed to the continuing role of the High Representative and his Office. The Office of the High Representative remains the final authority and theatre regarding the civilian implementation of the General Framework Agreement for Peace, and that includes our support for the use of Bonn powers if the situation requires.

We welcome today's unanimous adoption of resolution 2443 (2018), which authorizes the European Union (EU)-led Operation Althea (EUFOR Althea) for a further 12 months. The consensus on the resolution demonstrates the commitment of the United Kingdom and the international community to security in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Office of the High Representative and EUFOR Althea are crucial vehicles for enabling the international community to support the maintenance of Bosnia and Herzegovina's security, stability and territorial integrity, which are vital to the country's future as a modern democratic European State.

As I said, there was once a time when the Council dealt with Bosnia every day of its existence. I have had the privilege of working on the Balkans file for more than 20 years, on and off. I am somewhat saddened by what the High Representative tells us of how some issues are still unresolved and how they repeat themselves. But I also want to point out that the hard-won peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina are fragile and should not be taken for granted. While the current situation remains calm, threats to security remain, alongside new challenges such as increases in migration, as the High Representative mentioned. That is a very important issue for the EU and for Europe. It is our regional crisis, as it were, and something in which the EU has invested a huge amount of time, effort, money, coaching and patience. We will be hearing later from the EU Ambassador, who will be able to outline the EU's position more clearly.

I wanted to briefly address what the Russian Ambassador said in his statement before the vote. Russia is a member of the Contact Group and of the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board for Bosnia and Herzegovina. We would much rather see Russia trying to do everything it can to consolidate Bosnia and Herzegovina as a State and to help it modernize and make progress towards the Euro-Atlantic institutions that since the Dayton Peace Agreement was signed have been the foundation of its existence as a modern State in its region, Europe. I think that would be the best service that we could all do for Bosnia.

Turning to the subject of the elections, the United Kingdom welcomed the calm and orderly conduct of the elections, which were generally competitive, but we continue to be concerned about the level of the ethnic divisions in politics and the reports of irregularities. The inability to resolve key issues of election reform prior to the elections was disappointing and is a clear and ongoing concern. The divisive and nationalist political rhetoric, which was especially loud in the run-up to the elections, is dangerous and creates an environment where real long-term security and stability will be difficult to achieve.

It is also backwards-looking, and what Bosnia needs most of all is to move forward. Other countries in the Balkan regions are moving forward and making progress on their EU accession arrangements. Where they wish to, they are making progress with getting closer to NATO. That benefits regional security and stability, and Bosnia and Herzegovina once again risks being left behind in that regional modernization and progress. In particular, those in positions of responsibility should act in the interests of all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina rather than spreading divisive sentiment.

I want to echo what the High Representative said about waiting until those leaders have taken office before we properly hold them to account. I also want to make it clear that we will hold them to account. Political leaders need to show leadership and tolerance and they need to help modernize their country. At a crucial time following the elections, political leaders must work together in a cooperative manner to form Governments quickly so that progress can be made on key reforms, Euro-Atlantic integration and the 5+2 agenda. Those reforms are important because they will bring improvements to the day-to-day lives of all of Bosnia and Herzegovina's citizens. They are also important because they help to embed national and regional security and stability — an issue that, as I said at the beginning of my statement, has long occupied the Council.

Those in positions of responsibility should act in the interests of all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and it is especially concerning that the rhetoric and reluctance to compromise are indicative of the wider political environment. We will be watching developments closely. It is also important that the political leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina urgently address all judgments regarding elections in order to ensure that all citizens have the ability to participate fully in the democratic process, as they all deserve. It is regrettable that many of those issues have remained unresolved over several election cycles, which is a significant amount of time. Any resolution to those issues needs to meet international standards and uphold the principle of equality for all citizens, including the ability to elect officials and be elected.

Conversely, we welcome the progress made by Bosnia and Herzegovina on certain aspects of reform, for example in the adoption of agricultural and energy strategies and the eventual adoption of the criminal procedure code — although the delay in doing so was regrettable. We have also welcomed the continued cooperation on women and peace and security and encourage that to continue.

Finally, I want to echo what the High Representative said about reconciliation. Srebrenica remains the worst massacre in Europe since the end of the Second World War. Nine thousand Muslim men and boys were taken from their homes and murdered. It is absolutely vital that reconciliation efforts be made in genuine earnest and accelerated.

Mr. Ipo (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation thanks Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, for his comprehensive briefing on the fifty-fourth report on the implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina (S/2018/974, annex).

Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the progress made in Bosnia and Herzegovina in recent years, following the implementation of the Dayton-Paris Accords on 14 December 1995. The Accords, signed under the auspices of the international community, have helped to restore peace and endow the country with multicultural, multi-religious and multi-ethnic institutions.

My country notes with satisfaction the firm commitment of the Bosnian authorities to undertake the necessary reforms, particularly in the areas of the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary, in order to complete the cycle of socioeconomic transformation in the country and to encourage a favourable review of its application for membership of the European Union. My delegation also welcomes the Parliamentary Assembly's adoption of the necessary amendments to the code of criminal procedure in order to effectively combat the scourges of corruption and organized crime, which are the main obstacles to the economic and social take-off of the country. The adoption of those legislative amendments is an important step in the establishment of the rule of law and the fight against impunity, in order to promote national reconciliation.

However, that positive momentum should not prompt us to lose sight of the administrative and institutional dysfunctions, especially those of the general elections on 7 October. According to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and local non-governmental organizations, those elections were marred by unequal access to public media, irregularities on electoral lists and the partiality of local observers at polling stations. My delegation therefore encourages the Bosnian authorities to remedy the shortcomings observed in the organization of the elections and invites all stakeholders to submit their complaints in the context of the existing legal procedures.

Côte d'Ivoire is concerned about the persistence of ethnic tensions. We therefore call on all political groups and Bosnian populations to combine their efforts to preserve the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In conclusion, Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the spirit of compromise of

the States members of the Security Council that has made it possible to renew the mandate of the European Union-led peacekeeping force Operation Althea, whose mission remains relevant in the search for peace, security and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to join previous speakers in welcoming to the Chamber Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to thank him for his report on the implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina (S/2018/974, annex).

Our delegation has taken note of the report of the High Representative on the achievements and positive developments in the country over the past six months, such as the recent adoption of the long-awaited amendments to the code of criminal procedure by the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in line with international standards, as well as the completion of the country's eighth general elections on 7 October. We also commend the progress made by Bosnia and Herzegovina during the reporting period with respect to economic reforms in order to strengthen the economy, reform institutions and reduce unemployment. Those are all signs that there is a common vision for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

However, while significant progress has been made, we are concerned by the decision in August of the National Assembly of the Republika Srpska to revoke its support for the Srebrenica report of 2004. That revocation only serves to undermine the political stability and prosperity of the country, endangering all the achievements and efforts made by the parties for reconciliation among various ethnic groups and communities and prospects for the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In that regard, we call on all parties to refrain from divisive rhetoric and actions that could endanger the stability of the country and hinder the implementation of the Peace Agreement.

On the other hand, regarding the general elections on 7 October, the Government of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea welcomes the fact that the elections were held without any serious security incident, as reflected in the report of the High Representative. At the same time, we regret that the parties did not implement the recommendations of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in order to improve the integrity of the electoral process before the elections. In that context, while we praise the progress made, we believe that there is still much to be done and that we must continue working towards a common vision of the future that will help to foster a lasting national unity that will cement Bosnia and Herzegovina's role in the Balkans, Europe and the world. We therefore encourage the parties to amend the laws regarding the House of Peoples of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, to strengthen the rule of law, ensure the full implementation of the election results and pursue efforts to contain and eliminate ethnic divisions, crime, corruption, violent extremism and terrorism, which remain key issues in ensuring stability and prosperity in the country and the region.

In conclusion, my delegation advocates full respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We commend the commitment of the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina within his mandate and we emphasize our support for his efforts to promote the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement. We also welcome the extension of the mandate of the European Union-led peacekeeping force Operation Althea, which we have just unanimously adopted (resolution 2443 (2018)), and we hope that the mission will continue its important work of assisting the country and facilitating the process of achieving lasting peace and stability, as well as its support for the work of the High Representative and the United Nations country team. The Republic of Equatorial Guinea is ready to work with the international community to support the process towards lasting peace and security and sustainable development in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Tenya (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting. We also thank High Representative Valentin Inzko for his important briefing. We would like to highlight the work done by his Office in support of the implementation of the civilian mandate of the General Framework Agreement for Peace and express our support for his leadership.

Peru recognizes the unity, territorial integrity and sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina and considers it necessary to move to strengthen its independence. For that reason, we note with concern the limited progress made on the implementation of the 5+2 agenda, which has five objectives and two conditions for the closure of the Office of the High Representative for

the Implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina. We consider the general elections of 7 October and the political process that led up to them to have been positive to the extent that they were carried out peacefully and inclusively. It is always important for citizens to be able to choose their representatives freely through free and democratic elections. At the same time, we must deplore the fact that Bosnia and Herzegovina's electoral procedures could not be amended to facilitate a more far-reaching democratic process and that ethnic confrontation prevailed over the constructive approaches that the country and its citizens require in order to build sustainable peace.

Faced with such a situation, we must continue to emphasize the need to strengthen the rule of law, build inclusive institutions and, in that connection, promote political dialogue and reconciliation. We cannot continue to lament incidents of violence. Political leaders must live up to their responsibility in that regard and share a vision for the future that is centred on the economic and social development of the country. In that regard, we emphasize the value of diversity and the importance of safeguarding it in order to build a strong democracy based on inclusive, transparent and accountable institutions that guarantee access to justice and the peaceful resolution of conflicts and prevent further violence.

We view positively the efforts aimed at European integration and compliance with the decisions of the Constitutional Court. With regard to the latter, however, we must stress the urgent need to harmonize local legislation. We underscore the importance of the amendments to the criminal procedure code that have been adopted in order to more effectively combat organized crime and corruption, as well as the need to complement them with the creation of a specialized prosecutor's office and criminal chamber. We also underline the importance of safeguarding the autonomy of the various parts of the system of administration of justice and of respecting the role that the press and civil society organizations are called upon to play in order to guarantee the rule of law in a democratic society.

We deplore the rhetoric of hatred, ethnic confrontation, belligerence and the glorification of war criminals. We believe that the decision of the National Assembly of the Republika Srpska to repeal the report on the Srebrenica genocide reveals a rejectionism that must be condemned. We note with particular concern that those tensions continue to hamper access to justice, reconciliation and the safe and dignified return of refugees and internally displaced persons to their homes, with full recognition of their ethnic and religious diversity.

I conclude by stressing the importance of the parties' full cooperation with the High Representative and with the European Union-led peacekeeping force Operation Althea. They can count on Peru's full support in fulfilling the mandates we have just renewed.

Mr. Cohen (United States of America): I thank High Representative Inzko for his work in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the past nine years and for his dedicated leadership of the Office of the High Representative.

The Office's mission reflects the very ideals that the Security Council envisions for a modern Bosnia and Herzegovina, a peaceful and viable democracy that is on course for Euro-Atlantic integration and responsible for its own destiny and future. The United States reiterates its strong support for the mandate of the High Representative under the Dayton Accords as the final authority on the interpretation of the civilian implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement. We consider the role of High Representative Inzko to be essential, especially in the aftermath of the October general elections and as the country continues to contend with the divisive nationalistic rhetoric that threatens to undermine gains made under the agreement. We also commend the continued work of the European Union-led peacekeeping force Operation Althea and its role in preserving a safe and secure environment in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The United States is pleased to support the renewal of its mandate.

We are concerned about those who seek to weaken the constitutional order of the single State of Bosnia and Herzegovina, composed of two entities and three constituent peoples, and we call on the members of the Council to remain vigilant against any efforts to undermine Bosnia and Herzegovina's State-level institutions. We renew our collective commitment to upholding the Dayton Peace Accords by maintaining the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country.

The United States will hold accountable those who threaten Bosnia and Herzegovina's peace, security and stability. Accountability is essential to discouraging spoilers to the country's political process. Let me reiterate a position that we have repeatedly made clear in the Chamber. Bosnia and Herzegovina's leaders must demonstrate the political will to follow through

on the commitments necessary to cementing their country's path into the European Union and NATO. Euro-Atlantic integration is the only path for Bosnia and Herzegovina's future as a responsible global player. Those steps must be taken in concert with efforts to strengthen the rule of law, tackle corruption, increase economic opportunity and otherwise respond to the needs of all the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, regardless of their ethnicity or religion.

There is much to be optimistic about. We see Bosnia and Herzegovina's future in the 23-year-old poet who organized a nationwide poetry contest to fight hate speech. We see the country's future in the work of its Interreligious Council, which just celebrated its twentieth anniversary and dedicates its time to promoting interfaith dialogue and visiting the sites of attacks on religious institutions, four of which it has visited in the past year. We also see the country's future in the ethnically diverse students from the town of Jajce, who protested the further segregation of schools after local authorities sought to build a school just for Bosnian Muslim class members.

The United States looks forward to a time when Bosnia and Herzegovina fully satisfies the objectives and conditions for the closure of the Office of the High Representative, also known as the 5+2 agenda, as established by the Peace Implementation Council.

Mr. Tumysh (Kazakhstan): I thank High Representative Valentin Inzko for his comprehensive update on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina based on his recent report (S/2018/974, annex). We are also pleased to see in the Chamber the delegations of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the European Union, Serbia, Croatia and neighbouring countries.

Over the past six months since the last meeting of the Security Council on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (see S/PV.8248), important events have occurred in the country, most importantly the general elections held on 7 October. We believe that the elected political leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina have a new opportunity to focus on the future of the country and not on its past and to meet the national interests of all of its peoples and citizens. It is now vital that the new leadership realize and accept responsibility for the situation in the country and make every effort to move further in a unified direction. The international community should help it engage in constructive dialogue in a spirit of cooperation. That is where we can see the growing importance of the special role and responsibility of external actors who have the opportunity to positively influence the situation.

In that context, Kazakhstan welcomes the continuous efforts of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe mission in promoting stability and reconciliation, while assisting Bosnia and Herzegovina on its path to regional, political, economic and social integration. We commend the project activities of the mission in the areas of good governance, justice and education, which uphold human rights and the rule of law for all citizens. We also believe that today's extension of the mandate of the European Union-led peacekeeping force Operation Althea for another 12 months is a necessary step on the path to bringing peace and sustainability to the region.

In May, the members of the Security Council voiced in this Chamber both the achievements and their concern about the many serious problems that exist in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Unfortunately, those challenges have not gone away and are waiting for their further settlement. We therefore consider it necessary to speed up the process of forming the House of Peoples, in accordance with the decisions of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the functional Government of the country at all levels for their urgent implementation in practice.

We take positive note that, within the framework of the reform agenda for 2015 to 2018, the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina are implementing measures for broad structural socioeconomic reforms. However, as mentioned by the High Representative in his report (S/2018/974, annex) most of those reforms remain at the preparatory stage, including the depoliticization of public administration and the restructuring of State-owned enterprises, as well as reforms in legislation entrenching the rule of law in every region of the country.

In that regard, the main challenge is still in formulating constitutional reform in order to improve the system of public administration. The Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina should work closely with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to improve the state of the economy and implement reforms to improve the business and investment climate. The Government-led reform of the financial system should be aimed at reducing the share of the shadow economy and the related negative implications of corruption. To

that end, the role of the citizens themselves is invaluable, and non-governmental organizations and the media must be supported at the legislative and executive levels. In that context, it is important to accelerate the adoption of a nationwide strategy for managing public finance, as well as strategies in areas such as energy, employment and the national programme to harmonize the Bosnia and Herzegovina legal system with European Union standards.

Kazakhstan additionally notes the issue of migration and refugees that was brought to the attention of the Council at its previous meeting on this issue. The recent events that took place in Bosnia and Herzegovina on the border with Croatia at the end of October clearly demonstrated the existence of that problem and the need for the timely and high-quality response of the authorities and international organizations. Along with the resolution of priority issues on the accommodation of migrants, it is necessary to comprehensively approach the settlement of that big challenge in the long term. Stability not only in Bosnia and Herzegovina but in South-East Europe in general depends on that. Therefore, not only the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also international organizations, foundations and relevant European Union structures, should actively participate in that process.

To conclude, our delegation calls on the new leadership of Bosnia and Herzegovina to take all measures to eliminate the existing costs of the judicial system and ensure depoliticization, impartiality and independence, including in the consideration of war crimes cases. Kazakhstan also considers it crucial to emphasize the high importance of respecting the Dayton Accords as the basis not only of civil peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also of stability and security in the region. Reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina can be an example of resolving one the most complex and protracted conflicts in the history of Europe and become a pattern for other States and regions of the world to follow.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): I would like to thank Mr. Valentin Inzko for presenting his twentieth report (S/2018/974, annex) as High Representative, a sobering milestone. We highly value his dedicated personal efforts and persistence in carrying out his mandate for the greater good of the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union later this morning.

I will focus on the following issues: first, the rule of law; secondly, the Office of the High Representative; and thirdly, the issue of stability.

First, with regard to the rule of law, in the previous debate on this item in the Council in May (see S/PV.8248), we expressed concerns about the rule of law in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We have seen some responsible steps taken since then, such as the passing of amendments to the criminal procedure code, but serious concerns remain. Erosion of the rule of law is a threat to any democracy. When in combination with divisive and revisionist rhetoric, such as that which we continue to see in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it becomes a toxic mix. We therefore call on the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina to strengthen the rule of law in their country, and to do so convincingly and at all levels. Let me reiterate that the divisive and revisionist rhetoric of political leaders is conducive neither to reconciliation and cooperation, nor to the political need to make compromises. We underline the points on accountability in that context that were just made by our American colleague. We also call on the authorities to amend the election law, and State institutions must continue to function properly.

Secondly, I turn to the High Representative and his Office. With the rule of law under pressure and rhetoric thriving, upholding the civilian aspects of the General Framework Agreement for Peace becomes even more crucial, and the engagement of the Office of the High Representative becomes even more pertinent. The circumstances for closure of the Office are not yet there As was pointed out by Mr. Inzko, Bosnia and Herzegovina has made limited progress in completing the 5+2 agenda. The Kingdom of the Netherlands remains steadfast in its support for the High Representative and his Office. Twenty-three years after it establishment, the work is far from done — unfortunately, I would like to add.

Thirdly and finally, I will address stability. It is a precondition for strengthening the rule of law and a precondition for upholding the civilian aspects of the Framework Agreement. The European Union-led peacekeeping force Operation Althea is key in supporting the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina in maintaining a safe and secure environment for its

citizens and maintaining stability in the region. We therefore welcome the unanimous adoption today of resolution 2443 (2018), renewing the mandate of Operation Althea.

In conclusion, in his first report to the Security Council, the first High Representative, Carl Bildt, wrote that lasting peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina "requires a genuine commitment to ... the building of a future in common" (*S/1996/190, para. 104*). That observation still holds truth today. The Kingdom of the Netherlands continues to support Bosnia and Herzegovina's Euro-Atlantic integration in order to ensure the future prosperity and security of its people and the region. That future depends on the political leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina and their will to reconcile, cooperate and conclude highly needed political compromises. In short, it depends on their will to truly lead. The time to do so is now.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): Let be begin by thanking High Representative Valentin Inzko for his briefing. Poland would like to convey its full support for his Office and appreciation for its pivotal role in maintaining stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The international community has entrusted the High Representative with great responsibility and provided him with far-reaching prerogatives, the Bonn powers, which should be used if the situation requires.

Poland aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union later in our discussion.

There are clear conditions set by the Peace Implementation Council for the closure of the Office of the High Representative, namely, the 5+2 agenda. Like all other members of the international community, Poland would like nothing more than to see them fulfilled. As yet, however, that has not happened.

We welcome the adoption today of resolution 2443 (2018), which extends the mandate of the European Union-led Operation Althea for another year, and the European Council conclusions of 15 October, which confirmed its readiness to continue the mission's executive military mandate of maintaining a safe and secure environment. As contributors to the mission since its inception, we are proud to be part of that effort.

We note with appreciation the commitment of the State-level institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina to European integration as manifested in the ongoing work on the European Commission questionnaire. We would also like to see the activation of the membership action plan as soon as possible so that all citizens might benefit from stability and security within Euro-Atlantic structures. It lies squarely within the responsibilities of the governing elites to remove all obstacles along that path, particularly with regard to the registration of immovable defence property.

There is much cause for concern in Bosnia and Herzegovina today. It is worth recalling that, although there is no imminent danger of armed conflict, stasis should not be mistaken for stability. Almost a quarter of a century after the Dayton Peace Agreement, the country's political elites have signally failed to instil the sense of common destiny that could unite the country's peoples. Loyalties still lie along the ethnic lines. Young people, the future of the country, emigrate to seek a better future elsewhere. Centrifugal forces fuelling nationalistic rhetoric glorifying convicted war criminals and a lack of economic perspective, combined with the endemic weakness of the State, are a dangerous mix.

We meet today at a very delicate moment as the outcome of the October elections is just being finalized. We welcome the fact that they were genuinely competitive and conducted peacefully. Regretfully, however, neither the reform of the electoral law nor the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights have been introduced, and the situation remains sensitive. It is now incumbent upon political parties to proceed promptly with the formation of a Government on all levels so that the will of the people is implemented and fundamental institutional stability is put in place. It is also the responsibility of the political elites to continue with the reform agenda with firmness renewed energy.

In conclusion, let me reiterate that Poland is vitally interested in seeing Bosnia and Herzegovina as a united, prosperous and modern democratic country, strongly anchored in the Euro-Atlantic structures. We have been with Bosnia and Herzegovina since the beginning, and we will continue our active support as we have done so far.

Mr. Melki (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the High Representative for the Implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Valentin Inzko, for his enlightening briefing on the latest developments, particularly in the electoral process.

The citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina went to the polls on 7 October to elect their representatives at the level of the cantons, parliamentary assemblies and the presidencies. More than 20 years after a deadly conflict was brought to an end by the Dayton Peace Accords, we can today be pleased by the holding of elections deemed free by observers of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. However, the many irregularities referred to in the report (S/2018/974, annex) of the High Representative deserve our attention so as to prevent their recurrence in future elections.

The new authorities will face three priorities following the elections. The first, which is essential for the future of the country, is national cohesion. As pointed out by the High Representative and several members of the Security Council, the provocations and controversies launched by some political leaders fuel inter-community tensions and undermine efforts to build trust among the communities. It is the responsibility of the new leaders to reject rhetoric and positions that are likely to reopen the wounds of the past. As such, almost a year after the closure of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and the creation of the Residual Mechanism, France strongly condemns the glorification of crimes and war criminals, regardless of their community of origin. It is unacceptable that after the commission of cruel acts — and we all remember the Srebrenica massacre, among others, as has been recalled — that politicians continue to lift up as examples those responsible for the most serious crimes. Strengthening national cohesion requires more than ever that there be progress towards a more consensual operation of the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We welcome the amendments made to the criminal procedure code, which are an all-too-rare example of a constructive approach.

National cohesion will have to be based on justice. That is the second priority, no less essential, on which I wish to expound. The rule of law and respect for human rights are not a luxury to which only prosperous countries can lay claim. On the contrary, it is a condition for just and sustainable economic and social development, the vitality of civil society and the stability of institutions. France therefore calls on all political actors to respect the decisions taken by national and international judicial bodies, including on the issue of electoral reform, in the interests of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Bosnian citizens.

On the other hand, it is essential to make progress in the fight against corruption and organized crime and to ensure that all investigations are conducted in the most impartial manner. We expect the Bosnian authorities to take strong measures against a phenomenon of corruption that fuels mistrust of the authorities and encourages younger generations to continue to leave the country. The High Representative has just mentioned the statistics of those departures, a worrying indicator for the future of the country.

That brings me to the third and last priority, which is the European perspective. France associates itself with the statement to be delivered on behalf of the European Union in a few minutes. The prospect of European Union integration, in due course and when the conditions are met, is an extension of the European Union's widespread and multifaceted involvement in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Throughout that involvement, the European Union military Operation Althea, to which we have just renewed our collective support and which must continue its transition with regard to its non-executive tasks, continues to contribute to the stabilization of the country. The competent European services, for their part, are redoubling their efforts to support Bosnia and Herzegovina in its rapprochement with the European Union and to prepare an opinion on the candidature of Bosnia and Herzegovina for membership in the European Union. It is up to Bosnian political leaders to implement the necessary reforms, particularly in the areas of the rule of law, human rights and economic and social development, in order to make progress along their path towards Europe. In that perspective, we encourage Bosnian political leaders to favour a consensual decision-making process.

As we commemorate the centenary of the end of the Great War, we have the responsibility to bear witness to the cruel violence that ravaged Europe over the past century and to defend, with force and conviction, a spirit of reconciliation. It is not only an ideal but also a practice, as has been mentioned. France does that on a daily basis with Germany. We encourage the leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina to engage resolutely in that direction with the interests of all Bosnian citizens as their sole objective.

Mr. Orrenius Skau (Sweden): Let me also begin by thanking the High Representative, Mr. Valentin Inzko, for his informative briefing today. Sweden continues to fully support his mandate and his important work for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Twenty-three years have passed since those intense November weeks in Ohio, when the Dayton Aagreement on the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina was being negotiated. The Agreement marked the starting point of the long path towards reconstruction and reconciliation. While much has been achieved over the years, important steps remain for Bosnia and Herzegovina to build a country of prosperity, peace, stability and equality for all.

The conduct of general elections last month was one such important step. We welcome that the elections could proceed without any major security incidents. At the same time, we condemn the threats and attacks against journalists during the election campaign. We also regret that the campaign was tainted by divisive and nationalistic rhetoric, and that more attention was not given to what is most urgently needed — reform.

Socioeconomic reforms and improvements in the rule of law must be at the centre of Bosnia and Herzegovina's political priorities. High unemployment, widespread corruption and mismanagement erode the trust between citizens and authorities. As we heard from the High Representative, young and educated citizens are leaving the country to look for opportunities elsewhere. That is a worrying trend that must be reversed. Yet the pace of reform has unfortunately stalled in recent years. The country's political leaders must now take on the responsibility they have to enable it to make a rapid return to a path of reform. To that end, all the relevant actors must now engage in constructive dialogue aimed at forming Governments and parliaments at all levels without further delay.

Bosnia and Herzegovina reconfirmed its strategic priority of joining the European Union (EU) with its application for membership in 2016. The further integration of the Western Balkans remains a top priority for the European Union. We welcome the participation of the observer of the EU in our meeting this morning, elaborating on EU efforts, and align ourselves with his statement. A credible EU perspective, based on progress according to its own merits, continues to be one of the most powerful drivers of peace, stability and prosperity in the region. In the work of achieving deeper integration, Bosnia and Herzegovina and its European partners must now strengthen their cooperation to meet their common challenges, which include trade and sustainable economic development, environmental protection, organized crime, terrorism and migration, to mention only a few.

Regional cooperation and reconciliation in the Western Balkans is crucial to stability and progress. Sweden therefore supports the Regional Cooperation Council's important work in strengthening good-neighbourly relations in the region. Bridging cultural and social differences through increased regional exchanges is essential, not least among children and young people, and involving young people in peacebuilding activities is definitely an important prerequisite for sustaining peace anywhere, as outlined in resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018). In that same context, a stable peace also requires the full participation of women. More attention and devotion to that issue is needed, and future reports from the High Representative should better reflect the specific challenges and opportunities for women. Such analyses integrating a gender perspective would benefit our future briefings and inform a more strategic response.

Finally, for a country to move forward, its focus must be on the future rather than mired in the past. That is true both for reconciliation within the country and for its relations with neighbours. Bosnia and Herzegovina can continue to count on strong international support, and in that regard we welcome today's unanimous adoption of resolution 2443 (2018), renewing the mandate of the European Union military mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The European Union's commitment to Bosnia and Herzegovina's EU perspective is unequivocal. Sweden, for its part, will remain a steadfast partner of Bosnia and Herzegovina on its path towards a stable and prosperous future.

Ms. Guadey (Ethiopia): I would like to begin by thanking Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, for his comprehensive briefing on the latest report on the implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina (S/2018/974, annex). We would like to reiterate our support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We welcome the positive developments apparent in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the reporting period, particularly its continued engagement with the European Union (EU) on the country's accession process and progress on some legislative aspects, such as the code of criminal procedure. That progress is testament to the country's commitment to the EU integration process, with far-reaching long-term positive consequences

for the stability and prosperity of the country and the region at large.

We are nevertheless concerned about some of the reported developments that have undermined Bosnia and Herzegovina's political stability. In particular, we note the divisive rhetoric and actions that continue to challenge the constitutional order and integrity of the State-level judiciary system in the country. In that regard, we call on all authorities and political leaders to fully respect the decision of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Respect for the rule of law and the authority of the State institutions established under the Dayton Accords is fundamental to the State-building process in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is therefore important to ensure that all parties refrain from provocative statements and actions that could undermine the country's sovereignty, territorial integrity, cohesion and constitutional order.

We also note the continued disagreement concerning changes to Bosnia and Herzegovina's electoral law. We believe the issue must be handled very carefully, as it has the potential to undermine the country's continuity and stability. It is our hope that the Constitutional Court's ruling on its review of the election law will be implemented in a manner consistent with the Dayton Peace Agreement. We also encourage the relevant parties to undertake serious political dialogue to address and solve differences amicably.

In conclusion, we would like to express our support to the High Representative and his Office in discharging their mandate to monitor the implementation of the civilian aspects of the Dayton Accords. We call on the parties to extend the necessary cooperation, which is crucial to the work of the High Representative. We also recognize the vital role played by the EU military mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, EUFOR Althea, in maintaining safety and stability in the country. We welcome the adoption of resolution 2443 (2018) renewing the mission's mandate for another 12 months.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Regrettably, we have concluded that the quality of the reports of the High Representative for the Implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina gets worse every time. It is clear that Mr. Inzko is trying to tailor his assessments of what is going on in the country according to his notion — which suits him and the other supporters of the never-ending preservation of an outside protectorate for Bosnia and Herzegovina — of the incapacity of the country's governing bodies and entire political class generally. We believe that approach is fundamentally mistaken, disrespectful to Bosnians and untethered to reality.

Despite the painful legacy of the 1992-1995 conflict, Bosnia and Herzegovina is gradually developing on both the social and economic fronts. Its gross domestic product, exports and people's incomes are increasing and unemployment is falling. On 7 October general elections were once again held in accordance with democratic standards, as was confirmed by international observers from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. A foreign policy based on a balance of the interests of the Bosnian parties is being implemented. In 2010 and 2011, Sarajevo successfully carried out the functions of a non-permanent member of the Security Council, and in 2015 it presided over the Council of Ministers of the Council of Europe. Problems arise, as with any State, but they are far from insurmountable for Bosnians.

The successful experience of the Brčko District, where the foreign Supervisor's activities had been frozen since 2012, clearly shows that the Office of the High Representative is a relic of the past for Bosnia and Herzegovina. Worse than that, its very presence hampers the internal Bosnian dialogue and fuels attitudes of dependency among a certain part of the establishment. For the entire period of almost 10 years that the High Representative has been in Bosnia and Herzegovina, he has exploited the resources of his Office to advance the NATO and European Union agendas and settle accounts with Bosnian leaders who acknowledge the protectorate's irrelevance, instead of carrying out the tasks assigned to him with regard to implementing the civilian aspects of the General Framework Agreement for Peace.

In future, we urge the High Representative to avoid tendentious comments about one or other of the country's political parties on the eve of elections, as occurred during Mr. Inzko's interview with the Austrian newspaper *Wiener Zeitung* on 2 October, widely reproduced in the Bosnian media. In the interview, the High Representative directed one-sided criticism at the major Bosnian Serb party, the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats, breaching every democratic norm and his own mandate by essentially joining the election campaign on the side of the opposition.

The smearing of Bosnian Serbs and Croats who are against the erosion of the Dayton Peace Agreement and attempts to centralize the country long ago morphed into an end in themselves for the High Representative, who in his most recent report (S/2018/974, annex) has no qualms about referring to unverified media accounts or simply plucking overreaching conclusions out of the air. For example, he expounds on the alleged rampant corruption and the Bosnian authorities' inability to combat it based on the overtly politicized and completely unsubstantiated decision — which means there should be no place for it in a report — of the United States Department of State to include a Bosnian-Serb parliamentarian, Nikola Špirić, on its restricted list on the eve of the elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The High Representative also speculates about the tragic death of a student, David Dragičević, in a way that portrays what occurred as some sort of systemic flaw in the Republika Srpska judiciary. In our view such assessments are cynical and irresponsible. For those of our colleagues who would like to have a more balanced and factual picture of what is happening in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we once again recommend that they read the report of the Government of Republika Srpska, which according to tradition is drafted in Banja Luka to coincide with today's meeting. We urge the High Representative to abandon his one-sided self-involvement in Bosnia's internal political wrangling and do his proper job, the implementation of the 5+2 plan, which the Office has so far abandoned that this key task is barely mentioned in passing, like some minor side issue.

A clear inadequacy in the High Representative's report, in our view, is the absence, for all practical purposes, of any serious analysis of possible ways to emerge from the crisis situation in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina related to the exclusion of the procedure for filling the upper house of the Parliament from the current version of the Bosnia and Herzegovina election law. The situation is fraught with issues regarding the composition of the House of Peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Parliamentary Assembly and the installation of the President and members of the Government of the Federation. We hope that the Office of the High Representative will prepare the relevant completed plans at least by early December, when the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board meets.

As for Russia's approach to a Bosnian settlement, we continue to focus on doing everything possible to facilitate compliance with the Dayton Agreement and to develop a mutually beneficial dialogue with Bosnia and Herzegovina. Our message about the importance of respect for Bosnia and Herzegovina's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as the broad powers of the two entities and the equality of the country's three constituent peoples, as provided for in the Peace Agreement, were received in a constructive spirit by all the Bosnian parties during the working visit on 21 September by Sergey Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. We believe that the time for an outside protectorate has passed. The international community's role in Bosnia and Herzegovina should be based on helping Bosnians broaden the scope of their common interests and find their own recipes for compromise solutions to problem issues, including reforming the judicial system and removing the foreign experts from the country's Constitutional Court.

The Bosnian Croats' idea for fine-tuning Bosnia and Herzegovina's electoral system deserves attention. It would provide sufficient guarantees for filling senior leadership positions exclusively with legitimate representatives of each of the country's constituent peoples. Unfortunately, during the recent elections a member of the Presidium of Bosnia and Herzegovina from the Croats was once again elected by votes from the Bosniak majority. It would be desirable for the Bosnians to reach an agreement on how to prevent this practice in the future. It is not acceptable to artificially crank up the pressure on the Republika Srspka in Bosnia and Herzegovina and its legitimately elected leaders. We have a principled objection to unilateral sanctions on Bosnian Serb leaders.

In response to my British colleague, I want to confirm that as a member of the Contact Group of the Steering Board, Russia is committed to Bosnia and Herzegovina's stability and development. But we have not signed on to any obligations to drag the country into Euro-Atlantic structures. That is not our business and it is not the United Kingdom's, either. It is the business of the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, we definitely do not agree with the policy of dragging Bosnia and Herzegovina into NATO. Such actions only worsen the tensions in the country and distract the Bosnian parties from working for reform. In this case, the consensus on domestic political issues provided for in the 1995 Peace Agreement cannot be achieved, owing to the principled position of the Bosnian Serbs,

who are not prepared to see alliance-based dividing lines drawn between the Republika Srpska and Serbia.

We stand in solidarity with the views of many European States on the gravity of the threat of the proliferation of radical extremist ideologies in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The activities of the Islamic underground must be eliminated by the country's relevant bodies, including in the context of regional cooperation.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to join my colleagues in thanking Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, for his valuable briefing and recent report on the implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina (S/2018/974, annex). I also want to underline our full support to the High Representative in implementing his mandate and in his efforts to assist the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina to overcome the challenges they are facing.

We commend the efforts to maintain stability and unity in Bosnia and Herzegovina for all its racial and cultural components. We also recognize and appreciate the important role of the European Union-led multinational stabilization force in achieving that goal. We also welcome the Council's unanimous adoption today of resolution 2443 (2018), which sends a strong message from the international community to the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina that we are committed to maintaining security and stability there and determined to continue providing the support needed to enhance the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, signed more than two decades ago, continues to represent the cornerstone of institutional stability and to serve as a constant reference point for sustainable peace in the country. We are therefore concerned about the ongoing escalation of divisive and inflammatory rhetoric, and we call on all political leaders to prioritize the national interests of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina above all other considerations and to disregard any narrow racial or political interests that could undermine the chances for progress and stability. They must also work constructively to implement the results of the 7 October elections, including the formation of the Government, in order to make further progress in the political process as soon as possible. The Parliament must also intensify its efforts to adopt new legislation to provide the judicial system with the necessary tools for combating organized crime, corruption, terrorism and extremism, which constitute a direct threat to the rule of law and hinder efforts to achieve economic and social development and accomplish integration with the European Union.

As the report states, these events are happening at a time when limited progress is being made in implementing the 5+2 agenda established for the closure of the Office of the High Representative, especially where the registration of defence property in the Republika Srpska is concerned. In that regard, we reiterate our full support to the Office of the High Representative, pursuant to the Dayton Peace Agreement and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. We call on him to intensify his efforts to fully implement the plan.

We are concerned about the increase in the number of refugees and displaced persons who returned to Bosnia and Herzegovina since the beginning of the year. Their number had grown to nearly 18,000 by October, whereas last year it stood at 758. Aid agencies have warned that this could potentially lead to thousands of people being left without adequate shelter.

In conclusion, Kuwait underlines the importance of respecting the unity, stability and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. All stakeholders must respect its national Constitution and all the judgments rendered by its judicial bodies to strengthen the pillars of stability in the country. We call on all parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina to make concerted efforts to implement the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and to respect the mandate of the High Representative, pursuant to annex 10 of that Agreement and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

Mrs. Cordova Soria (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Valentin Inzko, for his briefing.

Taking into account the early renewal of the mandate, we hope that Operation EUFOR Althea and the Office of the High Representative will continue to cooperate closely and play a constructive role in maintaining peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Bolivia reiterates its commitment to full respect for the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence

of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In that regard, we emphasize that safeguarding them requires that its Constitution and the decisions rendered by the judiciary be respected, in accordance with the rule of law. We also call on political leaders and all parties to refrain from using rhetoric that promotes the division of the country.

With regard to recent events, we commend the holding of general elections in October and welcome the fact that they took place in an atmosphere of calm. However, we are concerned that the parties did not reach an agreement on electoral reform. We therefore call on them to work together in an inclusive environment and to respect the Dayton Peace Agreement, which remains the legal basis and benchmark for stability and the peaceful settlement of disputes among the parties.

We also welcome the adoption of the amendments to the criminal procedure code, a joint endeavour that demonstrates the commitment of the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina to continue undertaking the necessary reforms in order to promote the country's stability and contribute to the initiatives aimed at achieving the development and stability they seek. We therefore encourage them to focus on those aspects and to intensify their efforts in implementing the 5+2 plan as a prerequisite for the closure of the Office of the High Representative.

Despite those advances, certain challenges remain with regard to the political environment. We call on political leaders to pursue dialogue and take consensual action. The challenges should not be an obstacle that threatens the stability of the country. We urge all parties to put the interests of their people before particular political or ethnic interests.

Similarly, we call on local authorities, the international community and all regional, subregional and United Nations agencies to intensify efforts to support the thousands of refugees who have applied for asylum throughout the year, especially with the coming of winter, since many do not have adequate accommodation.

Finally, we encourage the entire population in Bosnia and Herzegovina to live together in harmony by overcoming the divisions of the past and putting shared development first. In that regard, we urge the international community to take a neutral and equitable approach in considering the concerns of all parties with a view to achieving lasting stability.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of China.

At the outset, I thank High Representative Inzko for his briefing.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a major country in the Balkans. General elections were held there recently. Maintaining the peace, stability and development in Bosnia and Herzegovina is in the common interests of the region and of the international community at large.

China respects the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the choice made by its people for the future of their country. We support the peaceful coexistence and common development of the various ethnic groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We hope that they will commit to dialogue and consultation to seek common understanding, implement the Dayton Peace Agreement, promote economic development and achieve greater progress in nation-building so as to ensure that the dividends of peace and development are shared by all.

The international community should increase its support for the economic development of the country and create favourable conditions for achieving national reconciliation and lasting peace. The international community should pay special attention to the views and concerns of all affected parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina and take a balanced and prudent approach. China welcomes the efforts made by High Representative Inzko in facilitating the political process in the country and hopes that he will continue to play a constructive role in the implementation of the Dayton Agreement, in accordance with his mandate.

China supports the Council's adoption of resolution 2443 (2018), which renewed the mandate of the European Union-led Operation Althea. We hope that the European Union force will continue to play a positive role in maintaining security and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Together with the rest of the international community, China is ready to do its part in helping Bosnia and Herzegovina achieve long-term peace, development and prosperity.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Dronjic (Bosnia and Herzegovina): As this is the first time that I am addressing the Council, allow me to begin on a personal note by expressing my feeling of pride and humility, for there is no greater honour for a career diplomat than to represent his country at the United Nations, and especially at a Security Council meeting.

I would like to congratulate China on assuming the presidency for the month of November and wish you, Mr. President, success in your endeavours.

As the Council is aware, on 7 October general elections took place in my country. The results of the elections have still not been declared official by the Central Electoral Commission. Pending the official confirmation of the results, the newly elected members of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina will be sworn in and take office on 20 November, in two weeks. According to the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Presidency is responsible for the country's foreign policy, which requires the approval by consensus of public statements made on behalf of the Presidency at international organizations and their bodies. As this is a transitional period, the outgoing members of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina could not reach consensus at this stage on the substance of the statement to be delivered at this meeting. Therefore, in my personal capacity, I can only thank Mr. Inzko for his twentieth report (S/2018/974, annex) and his briefing today.

I would also like to thank the members of the Security Council for adopting the resolution on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and extending the mandate of the European Union-led stabilization force, Operation Althea, for an additional period of 12 months (resolution 2443 (2018)). I note that, in spite of some difficulties, the resolution deems that the security environment in Bosnia and Herzegovina remains calm and stable.

Furthermore, I would like to thank the European Union for allocating €7.2 million in grants to support Bosnia and Herzegovina in the area of migration and border management.

In addition, I would like to thank the Government of the Netherlands and the United Nations Development Programme for granting $245,400 for the EXPLODE+ project, which will help to dispose of the ammunition surplus and further contribute to the security of the population in the country and the region.

In conclusion, I sincerely hope that the newly elected members of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina will find the modus operandi that will enable them to overcome situations like this one and spare me from being put in a somewhat awkward position.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Vale de Almeida: I would like to share with the Security Council the conclusions reached by the European Union (EU).

The European Union reiterates its unequivocal commitment to its perspective on Bosnia and Herzegovina as a single, united and sovereign country. Following the elections on 7 October and recalling the conclusions reached in June, the European Union expects all leaders to engage constructively on the formation of Government at all levels, which is in the interests of all citizens. The European Union recalls that it expects the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina to prioritize taking forward the reforms that are needed for the country to advance along its EU path, while ensuring the full and effective implementation of the reform agenda.

In that context, the European Union welcomes the continued presence of Operation Althea, which, in the follow-up of the 2017 strategic review, has refocused on its core mandate, while retaining the elements of capacity-building and training that are deemed still necessary and phasing out the other elements that are no longer relevant. In that context, as part of the overall EU strategy for Bosnia and Herzegovina, the European Union confirms its readiness at this stage to continue the executive military mandate of Operation Althea to support Bosnia and Herzegovina's authorities in order to maintain the safe and secure environment under a renewed United Nations mandate.

The European Union looks forward to the presentation of the next strategic review in 2019 as a basis for discussion with member States on the tasks of the European Union-led peacekeeping force and options for the future of Operation Althea, while also bearing in mind the need to support Bosnia and Herzegovina's progress in its EU integration process and taking into account the security situation on the ground. The European Union recognizes the importance of the continued coordination of the European Union-led Operation Althea with other international actors on the ground. The European Union at the same time continues

to urge the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the support of the international community, to accelerate its efforts to address the disposal of excess ammunition, weapons and explosive devices, as well as demining and other outstanding issues.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Serbia.

Mr. Milanović (Serbia): Bilateral cooperation with neighbours has always been the linchpin of Serbia's approach to foreign policy. It has considered it catalytic for a new type of relations of a higher quality in the Western Balkans and the whole of South-East Europe. That is particularly true of Bosnia and Herzegovina, our next-door neighbour and one of my country's closest partners. The endeavour has been motivated not only by immediate and practical needs but also by larger considerations, such as restoring confidence and achieving reconciliation, both inside and outside Bosnia and Herzegovina, and promoting the aspirations of both countries to join the European Union.

Serbia is a guarantor of the Dayton Peace Agreement, which was instrumental in putting an end to the tragic conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina more than 20 years ago. The Agreement also laid the foundation for the peaceful and stable future of its peoples and, very important, for their reconciliation. It is our firm belief that that Agreement also continues to be the basis of Bosnia and Herzegovina's progress in the future.

As a staunch advocate of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States in the conduct of international relations, my country has also been guided by that principle in its respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The development and stability of that country within the framework defined by the Dayton Agreement has always been of the utmost importance to Serbia, given that Bosnia and Herzegovina is also home to 1.5 million Serbs. After all, it is only through political stability and economic development that the country can ensure progress to all of its constituent peoples and become a prosperous country and reliable partner of the region.

More than two decades after the signing of the Dayton Agreement and the establishment of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a sovereign independent State, the key role of dialogue and consensus has been paramount in addressing all of the issues among the country's three constituent peoples and two entities. Those are just as important now — at a time of reforms, the pursuit of European Union membership criteria and the implementation of the required standards in the process of European integration — as they have ever been. We trust and believe that Bosnia and Herzegovina's political leaders have the will and resolve to address those issues through dialogue and that they will reach consensus to the benefit of all its peoples, who have a great stake in the well-being of the country.

Different opinions have been bandied about of late on Bosnia and Herzegovina vis-à-vis various questions, one of which pertains to the election law and its possible amendment. Serbia considers that those are internal questions that are best resolved through agreements among political actors within the existing legal system, in a constructive atmosphere and with mutual respect. On 7 October, however, general elections were held in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is expected that Government institutions will soon be established and that they will assume their responsibilities in the interests of all of Bosnia and Herzegovina's citizens.

Serbia will remain an eager and reliable partner in achieving ever-more dynamic cooperation in the interests of both countries. We continue to invite dialogue at all levels and promote bilateral relations. Regular contacts have also been maintained at the working level and concrete questions requiring joint efforts have been identified. Those questions are also expected to be addressed upon the completion of the electoral process and the establishment of new institutions. In that connection, Serbia stands ready not only to maintain its level of cooperation but also improve it, together with the central authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to intensify its relations with the Republika of Srpska and conduct those relations in a transparent way, in accordance with the Dayton Agreement, and to expand cooperation with the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Serbia continues to be interested in furthering economic cooperation with Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially in the fields of investment, joint ventures, energy and infrastructure, among others. The trade exchange between the two countries is robust and increasing; it is expected to reach the €2 billion mark by the end of this year. Having invested over €1 billion, Serbia is one of the largest investors in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Consolidation rather than enlargement may be the ongoing priority of the European Union. We in the Western Balkans, however, have been emboldened by the messages from Brussels that the continuation of the policy of enlargement in our region is a stable process and that new regional memberships are even being envisaged before 2025. Serbia is ready to share its experience on the integration process and with respect to the negotiation chapters available to Bosnia and Herzegovina. We wish our neighbour and partner success in its reform and accession processes.

Serbia is one of the strongest proponents of regional cooperation. Political and economic stability is in the common interests of all of us in South-East Europe. Relentless in its efforts to create even better conditions to bring about economic growth and increase the living standards of the population of the region, my country will not be deterred by occasional divergent and disruptive messages, which we believed belonged to the past. Instead, we shall continue to work hard towards promoting stability, development and good-neighbourliness in the region, particularly with Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the aim of bringing about prosperity and a better future on both sides of the Drina River.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Croatia.

Mr. Drobnjak (Croatia): Croatia welcomes this opportunity to discuss the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. At the outset, I would like to welcome the High Representative, Mr. Valentin Inzko, and thank him for his report (S/2018/974, annex) and briefing today.

High Representative Inzko pointed out in his report that the Dayton Agreement guarantees the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the internal constitutional position of the entities and that three constituent peoples are equal. That should be our point of departure for today's debate.

As the only European Union member State neighbouring Bosnia and Herzegovina, and one of its main trade and investment partners, as well as a signatory of the Dayton Peace Agreement, Croatia has a special responsibility and interest in the overall well-being and stability of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina are therefore one of Croatia's foreign-policy priorities.

Croatia would like to see Bosnia and Herzegovina as a member of the European Union and NATO and as a country where genuine institutional and political equality among three constituent peoples — Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs — and all citizens is not only guaranteed on paper but implemented in practice as well.

At the previous Council meeting on this matter in May, Croatia cautioned that the period ahead of us would be of key importance for the future development of Bosnia and Herzegovina (see S/PV.8248). On 7 October, general elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina were held in an overall orderly manner and without major incident. We note that the elections were assessed as genuinely competitive by international observers.

However, we have witnessed that in those elections the fundamental principle of the full equality of three constituent peoples was not respected. Once again, in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a more numerous constituent people chose the representative of the smaller one. Contrary to the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitution and democratic standards, Croats were deprived of the opportunity to elect their member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina. That runs contrary to the Dayton Peace Agreement. It will not contribute to overcoming the legacy of the past or to the better functioning of the country, and neither will it strengthen the democratic standards and respect for the rights of all citizens. Quite to the contrary, that misuse of the election process has the potential to further burden relations among peoples and lead to the loss of trust among ordinary citizens in democratic institutions. Nothing could jeopardize the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina more than creating such misbalances among constituent peoples.

Croatia has continuously pointed out, including through our statements in this very Chamber, the complexity of the political and legal fabric in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which requires constant attention and carefully designed solutions. Regrettably, it seems that on too many occasions there has not been enough understanding and willingness to appropriately address the crucial problems of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As we emphasized in our statement in May, the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina confirmed that the legitimate and proportional representation of three constituent peoples at all levels is the overarching principle enshrined in the Constitution

of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Croatia fully respects the constitutional framework of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a federal State in which the three constituent peoples, along with the others and all citizens, should be equal at all political and administrative levels.

The pending reform of the election law and all further institutional reforms in Bosnia and Herzegovina should respect that fact. It is of key importance to embark on reform of the election law without delay in order to avoid possible similar electoral engineering in the future. By the same token, the latest election results need to be implemented in line with the Constitutional Court decision on legitimate and proportional representation, whether that is done based on an ad hoc solution or a permanent solution.

The refusal to implement the decision of the Constitutional Court on the reform of the election law jeopardizes the stability of Bosnia and Herzegovina, leaving open space for further political manipulations. It cannot be overstated: the principle of the equality of Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs represents the very foundation on which Bosnia and Herzegovina is built.

We now expect that all political leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina will assume their responsibilities and engage in the formation of the parliaments and Governments at all levels, by working constructively together, in the interests of the constituent peoples and all citizens of their country. In that respect, finding a domestic solution to enable the formation of the Federation House of Peoples and other political institutions dependent upon its formation, as required by Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitutional Court rulings, is of the utmost importance. Other election-related issues, including provisions for holding local elections in Mostar and the Bosnia and Herzegovina presidency, should also be immediately addressed.

As the strongest supporter and advocate of Bosnia and Herzegovina's stability, prosperity and territorial integrity, Croatia will continue to support Bosnia and Herzegovina as a sovereign and united country, at the European and international levels. Its future depends on the ability of three constituent peoples to embark together on a progressive and modern platform that embraces the highest democratic standards of legitimate political representation and to work together towards the country's institutional stability. That institutional stability is crucial for Bosnia and Herzegovina to meet in full its obligations arising from the European integration process.

Croatia has always been ready to assist Bosnia and Herzegovina in improving its institutional and administrative capacity and fulfilling all the requirements on the path towards integration into the European Union. We encourage our friend and neighbour to proceed without delay with the reforms in many fields, including the judiciary, the fight against corruption, economic reforms, efficient border management, as well as the fight against political radicalism and elements of religious extremism. Advancement in those processes is not only the best investment in the country's future, but also a way to help it overcome difficult burdens of the past.

Taking into account the political and security situation on the ground and the importance of maintaining a safe and secure environment, Croatia voices its support for the European Union's Operation Althea and the mandate entrusted to it by the Council.

Croatia strongly encourages the three new members of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina to work in the interests of their country, with particular sensitivity for the constituent peoples they represent, but also to rise above entity-focused and nationalist politics and reach out to all citizens. We expect the Presidency and the new Governments to uphold the common principles of the rule of law, respect for diversity and the commitment to lasting reconciliation, in a true European spirit.

Finally, as the strongest supporter and advocate of Bosnia and Herzegovina's stability, prosperity and territorial integrity, Croatia advocates, and will continue to do so, for a strong and permanent focus on Bosnia and Herzegovina at the European and international levels, this Chamber included. A sovereign, peaceful, stable and prosperous Bosnia and Herzegovina — a multiethnic country of three equal constituent peoples and all citizens — was, is and should remain our strategic goal.

The meeting rose at noon.